The Fearsome Island

The

Fearsome Island,

Being a Modern Rendering
of the Narrative

OF one Silas Fordred, Master Mariner of Hythe, whose shipwreck and subsequent adventures are herein set forth. Also an appendix accounting in a rational manner for the seeming marvels that Silas Fordred encountered during his sojourn on the fearsome island of Don Diego Rodriguez.

By *Albert Kinross.*

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DEDICATION.

Dear Zangwill,

I have to thank you for so much in the past, present, and I think I may venture on prophesy and say the future. Kindly accept this inscription as some small token of that gratitude. As for the book, I fear its contents will surprise you as much as they surprised

Yours most sincerely,

ALBERT KINROSS.

January, 1896.

THE PREFACE.

IN the reproduction of this narrative it was my intention to modernise the English of the original version. I am no great scholar, being more interested in the humanity of things than in their æsthetics; and, in the retelling of this story, I find that I have been completely overpowered by the original version, so that the language in which this history is here set forth is no language. I have, however, let it stand, as I feel that the leisurely dialect that I have instinctively adopted is more in keeping with the character and surroundings of Silas Fordred than the crisp, clear-cut phraseology of to-day.

Also in the original manuscript were many coarse phrases that I have all but eliminated; should one or two such have crept into this version, will the indulgent reader kindly pass them by, merely regarding such in the light of landmarks of a day that was wont to express its thoughts and sentiments with no uncertain voice.

ALBERT KINROSS.

Hampstead, 1896.

INTRODUCTION

I WAS staying down at Hythe last winter, and, among other occupations, I found time to assist my very good friend Cobb, Town Clerk of the old cinque port, in sorting a mass of ancient documents but recently discovered in a musty chest that Back the beadle had stumbled across in the Town Hall cellar. These papers were, for the most part, connected with the businesses transacted by Cobb's remotest predecessors; with meat and drink furnished at the Lord Warden's banquets, and tithes paid to his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury. Our national enemy across the channel had given the worthy Councillors of those days much food for thought, and there were

many accounts of moneys spent with the object of offensive and defensive chastisement to be inflicted on that relentless foe.

But, among all these documents, many of which might possess great interest for the antiquarian or social economist, there was one that I read and re-read thrice before imparting its contents to my good friend Cobb; or stay, such rather was my intention, but, on second thoughts, I carefully placed the time-worn sheets in my ulster pocket — there was quite a bundle of them — and here in town I am turning into modern English what Silas Fordred penned with great labour and difficulty in the days of good Queen Bess.

Fordred shall tell his own story, and you, my readers (among whom I hope friend Cobb will occupy a foremost place,) believe or doubt! The story rings honest and the truth was more in

favour in those days than in this sceptic age.

Here follow the time-stained papers of Silas Fordred worked up into a narrative of some literary merit; for style and polish had he none, this blunt mariner of yester-year.

For want of a better title, and I hold that all things should have a distinctive name, I have headed this narrative:

The

Fearsome Island

Before the assembled Town Council of Hythe Borough I have read and set my name to this true statement of what befell me in my last voyage to the Southern Seas. If any there be that doubt, let them go down to my house in Stade Street and inspect the strange barque that carried me from the Fearsome Island to the good ship *Queen Marie* that brought me hither. Further, have I not shewn you vessels of gold that

were in the Dark Chamber, likewise the thirteen great diamonds that hung round the neck of the bronze idol? Also have you seen the knife of Spanish steel with the round ruby at its hilt and the two fangs that broke on my hand from the mouth of the Hag of Turret? The captain and seamen of the ship *Queen Marie* have spoken of the hairy man that was a-dying when I was discovered afloat and without food. What I have written is true on my oath and by my hope of entering heaven.

(SIGNED) SILAS FORDRED.

WITNESSED BY

EVAN the Welshman,
Town Clerk.

Chapter I

ON the third day of June, 1558, Mary that was called Bloody being then our Queen, Thomas Snoad and I set out from Hythe for the great port of Dover, where lay the ship *Brave Luck* that we had jointly purchased to trade with for our own profits and benefaction. Previously, both of us had been in the employ of Deedes, the great London merchant, who hath more ships than I have toes or fingers. We rose early in the morning, so that when we reached Dover the sun was close on midday and we were greatly athirst. Straightway we boarded our ship, in whose cabin was meat and drink in plenty, and, our appetites being stilled, we went into Dover town to prepare for the voyage

we were about to undertake. That same day we engaged fourteen seamen and three boys, also a black man from beyond the Middle Sea who was reputed to cook exceeding well and without causing an over-great stink.

Our cargo we put aboard: child's things from Chepeside, and horns that would make music; also cloth stuffs for such as wear garments, and good bows and arrows and broadswords for them that love to fight.

At the eleventh hour and before we hove anchor I bethought me of Dick Whittington, that was thrice Lord Mayor of London, and I hied back to the town and bought two cats that were with kitten, also a Tom-cat, exceeding fierce and black, that was sold me by a witch and had eaten man's flesh.

That night we slept on board, greatly tired, for we had been astir since sunrise putting chests and bales in the

hold, and it was on the second morning after quitting Hythe that we set sail and passed down the Channel on our way to Grand Canary and the Southern Seas.

It were idle to write here what befell during the first two months of our voyage, that in all things greatly resembled other voyages. Fair winds and pleasant trade with good profits were our lot.

The Negro cook was of a merry mood and amused us hugely, for he could dance and sing and make agreeable noises with pieces of wood held in his hands, and his smile was wide as the smile of a crocodile. Nor was he idle at his business, for he could prepare excellent dishes, many of which were new and unknown to us, and therefore the pleasanter.

We touched at the Gold River that runs into the ocean on the West of Africa, and spent some days bartering

for gold dust, ivory, and palm oil. It was here that our cook, the black knave, played us a scurvy trick. When we set sail once more, that foul Indian was nowhere to be found, and we were without cook. And then I remembered that he had said that his home was in these parts. He had deceived and deserted us, and his soul was black as his skin.

From the Gold River we sailed south along the coast, and went ashore at many places, till we reached a harbour from whence we could see a mountain with a flat top like a table. We had bartered away all our cargo and there was no further cause to prolong our voyage, so here we turned our ship's head and sailed joyfully North.

On the third day of journeying homewards great gales began to blow; for six days and six nights we ran with bare masts before the winds, and only God on high knew in what sea we were,

and, though we prayed at morn and eve, He told us naught.

On that sixth day methought the world would end, for there were huger seas about us than any I had ever seen before. The hold was full of water, and I wept bitter tears as wave after wave broke over Snoad's ship and mine.

"Beshrew me," said I to Thomas, my partner, "our cargo will suffer damage — the palm-oil runs to waste."

"Aye," said Snoad, "'tis I who feel each drop that spoils, even as thou," and he shook his bare head, and the great tears stood in his eyes, for Snoad was a man of much thrift, though unmarried.

The great cat that had eaten man's flesh was sore afraid, its hair stood erect on its back and its eyes shone like burnished brass. And in the night of that day, as Thomas Snoad and I were praying for light and a smooth sea, for we had neither slept

nor eaten save upright all the six days, an huger wave than all curled and splintered into a thousand pieces over us, and the water stung our faces like a shower of broken glass, while the ship *Brave Luck* swayed like a man drunk with ale, and its bow rose high into the air above our heads.

"God save us, Snoad!" said I.

"Amen!" said Snoad, and though we shouted, our voices were as a whisper. We could hear the seamen call on Mary that is the Virgin and Jesus who died on the Cross, and some knelt, while others threw their arms above their heads and trembled with the fear of death. There were wild eyes around us, and faces drawn and terrible as the faces of wild beasts that are mad with hunger and evil passion. I saw these things as in a dream, for they moved me not overmuch, and the men about me were not men as I had known them, and nothing was real till the ship fell

from under us and we were in the waters, Snoad and I, in a valley 'twixt mountains of water, now rising to the crest, now falling deep, like balls of down in an autumn wind. We could see the heads of the others bobbing like black corks, and overhead in the sky we saw the lightning glitter and run, while in our ears the thunder boomed death knells. It was a brave yet awful sight, and I think that hell can contain nothing more terrible than that black sea, with the black faces bobbing through the darkness, through which the lightning swished like a rapier of cold gold. Over the hold of our ship had been a cover of wood with handles of rope and two yards long and broad. This cover I made out bearing down on me. I reached out a hand, and my arm was fast twisted in the rope ere the next wave could bear me from this raft. Snoad was at my side.

"Give me your hand, Snoad," I shouted, but he could not hear my voice above the wind and waves that roared like many lions. I reached out my other arm and caught the top of his jerkin—'twas of good stout leather, —and he looked at me (his head was like a painting of John the Baptist's head on a platter) and spat water from his mouth.

"God save thee, Fordred!"

I saw the words on his lips but heard naught.

"Amen!" said I, and we clung together for the dear life for weary minute after minute; and when at last the grey dawn broke, there was land not over far from us, and the waves were bearing us thither at great speed. As we neared the shore we let go of our raft, and, taking what little strength remained to us, we swam on by ourselves till a huge breaker flung us heavily on the beach. We picked ourselves up

again — it was a joyful feeling, this standing once more upright on our legs — and went inland beyond the sea's reach.

We cast off our dripping garments and knelt naked to pray a thanksgiving, but, we were so tired and exhausted that we fell down close together, our legs refusing their office, and we slept thus in the grey dawn, naked and worn out. The far-off lands are warmer than ours, so we feared not to be sick by thus lying bare under the open sky.

So we fell asleep, a-weary from our toil and watching, and we lay quite still till the noonday sun smote on our eyelids. When we awoke, the sky was deep blue, the winds had ceased to rage, and the sea had grown calm and serene, so that we felt like two that had dreamed an evil dream and were but newly awakened. There was a pinching feeling at our stomachs; we

had fasted for many hours, and what we had lately eaten was of no great moment. Snoad and I arose and walked inland to where there were trees with strange fruits such as grow in distant lands, and we sat in the branches of one such and ate from a great gourd we had found at its foot. I looked at Snoad and saw that he was naked.

"Friend Snoad," said I, "where be thy garments? for surely thou dost bear thee as Adam when in the Garden of Eden."

"Friend Fordred," cried Snoad, "look to thyself!"

And I looked, and I too was naked! Then I looked up at Snoad, but he was nowhere to be seen; and I looked down at Snoad, and he was fallen from the branch with over-much laughing and lay now a-rolling on his back with a full mouth and great tears on his cheeks.

"Silas Fordred!" he cried, "wouldst thou choke me?"

And I too laughed till I dropped from my branch on to Thomas Snoad's stomach.

"Nay, we will both choke," I said, and began to laugh anew; but Snoad was silent for he had no wind.

After we had eaten we walked slowly back to the spot where lay our clothes, dry but marvellous small from the water and the hot sun. And then we went down to the sea all smooth and smiling.

"God save us, Fordred!" said Snoad, "where be we?"

"Aye, where be we?" I answered, and we shook our heads and looked around and upwards; and as we looked, what should we see but a huge idol, a great figure, shining and of bronze, such as mariners say are worshipped in the isles beyond Kathay that are called Nipong. We both

rubbed our eyes, so as to make sure that we saw true. Aye, there was the figure, a great woman with a calm face, and neither shift nor other garment. For eyes there were broad holes, and in and about these hollow sockets flew sea-birds, and they perched on her breasts, on her knees, and about her feet.

"Good Fordred," said Snoad, "if that be god of these parts let us make obeisance, it may be fitting and proper that we should."

"Nay," said I, in a stern voice and loud, "Thomas Snoad, rather let us cross ourselves and pray to the Blessed Virgin, who hath just saved us from death by drowning!"

"Thou art right, good Fordred," he replied; and we repeated the Lord's Prayer twice, for 'twas the only prayer that we could repeat from memory.

After that we walked closer to the idol with stout hearts and unafraid, and

we looked into its face, to its great nose, and the holes that were eyes, and to its neck—and on its neck hung stones that sparkled, big stones all white and glistening as I have seen the diamond stones shine in a goldsmith's shop, only these stones were larger than any that I had ever seen before, and I have been to the Tower of London, and seen the great ruby that was in the crown of King Harry of Agincourt.

"Those be diamonds," said Snoad.

"I will not say ye nay," I replied.

Then we looked again, up and down, and at the feet of the great figure were human bones, skulls and leg bones, and ribs and arms.

"See ye those, friend Snoad?" I asked.

"Yea, I see them; they be human sacrifices. I have heard tell of such among those that be heathens."

Thomas Snoad was one that always

had answer and explanation at his tongue's tip, even though he knew nothing of the matter in hand. This was his great weakness—a small thing, for he was as gallant a seaman as ever trod a ship.

We looked once more, and all the skeletons were broken across the middle, and the upper parts lay here and the lower parts lay there.

"See ye that, friend Snoad?" I asked, and my thoughts went back to the bones that are in the crypt of the Hythe Church.

"Yea," he made reply (as was his wont), "'tis most like to be their manner of offering sacrifice."

And for a few moments we stood wondering what manner of god this might be, and whose were the bones that lay all white at its feet.

Again our eyes lighted on the great white stones that sparkled more than a woman's eyes.

"They be for us," said Snoad. "Wilt climb and take them? 'Tis easy to reach. Mayhap there will come worshippers ere long and 'twill be too late."

"Be wise, friend Snoad," said I, "and think thyself of good luck should the worshippers not offer thee up as a sacrifice. The diamonds can wait, and, should we be discovered by the men that inhabit this land, we might have to pay a huge price."

I led him away, and we walked about all that day without seeing sign of man or human habitation. We ate fruits and berries, and great crabs that came out of the sea and sought to pinch us. These we slew with stones and pieces of rock, breaking their shells, after which they died. It was raw meat, but a hungry man waits not for a cook.

That night we slept under a broad tree, near a brook of running water that we had drank from. The next

morning when I awoke I was alone, and Thomas Snoad was nowhere to be seen.

"Snoad, Thomas Snoad!" I cried till my throat pained, but there came no reply. At last I bethought me of the diamond stones and the great lust that had shone in Snoad's eyes on the yesterday.

Quick I sprang to my feet, and ran with great speed toward the seashore, where stood the great idol of bronze with the glistening necklet, and, as I approached, I could see Snoad a-climbing from the huge toes onto the knees.

"Get thee down!" I cried. "Get thee down, thou thief, thou sacrilegious thief, there will be mischief in the deed and dire punishment to follow."

So I spake to Thomas Snoad, for God hath given me a honest soul.

He heeded not, and again I cried:

"Get thee down, Thomas Snoad!" But he heeded not; and now he had one hand on the outstanding breast and

he stood on the brazen knee, and then, as he swung upward to the neck where sparkled the jewel, the great bronze arms did close—aye, did close I say, and I have sworn it,—did close fast and sharp over Thomas Snoad, and his head and trunk fell one way and his legs and belly another, aye, right to my feet; and, as I crossed myself and fell down on my knees, I saw the arms of that accursed figure swing back wide open and empty as before, and Thomas Snoad lay at my feet in two halves, so that I understood the meaning of the broken skeletons all sundered in the middle, and I shook my fist at the curst idol, and the arms were wide apart and without motion, and the great white jewels sparkled mockingly in that morning's sun.

I knelt some minutes all fearsome and a-trembling, wondering to what devil's land this body o' mine had strayed, and, as I knelt, I could feel

something soft yet firm a-pressing gently against my thighbone, and at the same time I could hear a low sound such as is made by a cat that is pleased. I looked round to my side and there was the black cat from the ship a-fondling of me, he that had eat man's flesh and had dwelt with a witch. He was very friendly and there was a fond look in his face; but, for all that, I arose hastily, bethinking me of the body of poor Thomas Snoad that lay there dead and in two parts, and meseemed it were well did I arise and bury him ere harm befell. So I searched till I found a sharp stone all broad and flat like a spade, and with it I dug in the soft sand, so that by ten o'clock that day by the sun I had buried Thomas Snoad, all that was mortal of that gallant mariner. As the sand lay thick over him, I did think to say a prayer, and again I prayed to "Our Father which art in Heaven," that being the

only prayer that I could repeat without book or priest. I was alone now, and as the " Amen " left my lips my solitude and isolation came back to me strong and full, and my heart felt heavy within me and tears of self-pity stood in both my eyes. I was fit to weep, and lay helpless and without hope as is a despairing woman, till, with great effort, I repeated " Silas Fordred, that art a man, be thou a man." This I said thrice, gaining strength with each repetition, and the mist before my eyes vanished, though a tear trickled slow down both the sides of my nose and splashed onto the thirsty sand below. I saw clear once more, and the black cat was before me, gazing piteously into my face as if to share my burden of sorrow. I drew him gently onto my lap, and we both sat lonely and forsaken on the empty strand, pondering over what next we should do in that gruesome land of the brazen idol.

Chapter II

ON the next morning the cat and I held council—we had slept together on the previous night for the sake of the companionship of the other.

"Black cat of the witch," said I, after gazing long at him steadfastly and with much thought, "do thou that are skilled in Sorcery lead and I will follow," and with that I laid my hand lightly on the beast's head, and it looked up into my eyes unafraid and as a friend might do. After which, with tail erect and moustachios pointing right and left, it went inland, I following, and for two days and a night we journeyed through thick woods, with here and there a rich plain that was as fair a pasture land as are the marshes around Romney Town.

The Fearsome Island

Towards the vesper hour on the second day of our wanderings we came to a hill on whose crest stood a fair castle, which, though nowise old or a-crumbling, yet looked neglected and forsaken, being much overgrown with mosses, weeds, and climbing plants that flourish with great vigour in Southern lands, and grow there in one year more than such things grow in ten years in our own country.

"Black cat," said I, "let us enter," and together we strode up the hillside to a fair gate, that was arched and had ornaments of wrought-iron to its face of strong wood. This gate was let into the castle wall over against a round tower, such as I have seen at Windsor as a boy at the castle of King Harry that had six wives. Round about us reigned a death-like silence, and from the castle came no sound. I looked up, marvelling, at the rank grasses and untended growths, at the

window glass whereon the dust and grime lay thick, at the weather-stained masonry, and beyond, at the garden about the castle, where grew neither fruit nor flower, nothing but worthless plants and common weeds such as were in the woods through which we had passed on our way thither.

Greatly I wondered as to who might dwell in this deserted palace, and I looked around for means of entry. Over on the gate was a large knocker of bronze and shaped like an open hand stretched out in welcome. It was on a hinge and the knuckles were thick and heavy, so that when it fell the noise might be the greater. I reached out my hand, and was about to raise the knocker and clamour at the gateway, when I bethought me of poor Thomas Snoad and the fate that had overtaken him.

"Black cat,' said I, "there be strategy and there be cunning, and

wherefore, did I lack these arts, were I, Silas Fordred, master-mariner?''

With that I unfastened my belt of good leather, that cost me one groat and a penny at Canterbury fair, and I lifted up the bronze hand with the belt that I had wound around it, and, behold, the bronze fingers clutched the belt, closed as do lion's claws—yea, even as the arms of the idol had closed on poor Thomas Snoad. I laughed loud to myself at the sight, and the cat, too, did laugh, for I had escaped a cruel device and had outwitted some uncommon malignant sorcerer. High I swung the hand with my good leather thong, and then I loosed my hold and the fist fell back with a crash, while, at the same instant, the gateway opened wide from the inside, and without human aid. By the waning daylight I could see a broad hall, tiled and paved, with rich rugs and skins on the floor; the walls were hung with tapes-

tries and designs made of rare spears, bucklers and swords. Here and there were low couches that looked soft and inviting—it was a fair sight for eyes and body that had not rested on comfort and ease for many months. The sun was sinking fast—and the darkness approaches quick in these lands,—so I thought it unwise to enter the castle at this late hour and resolved to spend that night on the hillside, deeming it safer to rest there than in the great hall. The black cat, whom I had named Satan for a jest, lay by my side as on the other nights, he being by now mighty trustful of me and friendly. Ever and anon our eyes wandered through the darkness to the black outline of the castle, and, though there were many windows, we saw no light or sign of light in any one of the rooms. Only once I thought I could see a faint glimmer, as of a lamp, shine from the round window in the turret; but I

looked again and it was gone, and I looked again and it was a moonbeam that had painted a patch of silver on the pane. On the morrow, when the sun stood clear in the sky, and after I had bathed and drank water from a running stream so that all my wits might be with me, I entered at the castle gate. The brazen hand was still clenched over my belt of leather.

Satan was the first to enter the hall, a great chamber with many doors let into the wall on either side, while at the far end rose a broad stairway, which we ascended without mishap.

It would be idle were I to describe what was in that castle; suffice to say, it was like a nobleman's palace, with chairs of carved wood-work and great beds with spreading canopies, such as I have seen at the Palace at Hampton Court, by aid of my friend, Roger the Ratcatcher, who doth dwell in that famous abode.

With great caution we peered into many chambers, and no harm befell; and when we had descended the stairway and explored the rooms about the great hall, we passed yet beyond to where there were kitchens and storerooms, where we found stacks of dried fruits and vegetables, also sealed tins that we broke, and wherein were large pieces of flesh—beef and pork and the tongues of oxen.

We sat us down and feasted until our insides could be no more distended, and, our thirst being then far stronger than our hunger, we arose, thinking to go down to the stream that ran beside the hill whereon stood the castle, there to drink our fill of water.

Now, as once more we crossed the great hall, a marvellous strange thing befell. I had trodden on a square tile —it was green in colour, being the centre-piece of the design that orna-

mented the paving,—and this green tile yielded under my foot, so that, fearing some new witchcraft, with a deadly fear at my heart, I sprang high up into the air. It was a mercy that my legs were well up under me, for as a flash there swung 'twixt wall and wall a long blade of steel shaped as a giant sword. It passed low down, just above the head of Satan, the cat, just below the soles of my feet. It was a marvellous cunning piece of sorcery, for was I not bound to light once more on that green tile—so broad it was—and yet again, and yet again, till I should be quite tired, and without strength to spring, and then—I shuddered. Three times I jumped high into the air, like to a girl that skips with a rope, only this rope of mine was a steel knife, sharp and keen, and I thought many things, and all of them very terrible and uncomforting; and three times the long steel blade hissed

by, low down and from wall to wall. A fourth time I lighted on the green tile, but on this occasion the spell worked not; true, the sword issued forth as before, yet, instead of flashing 'twixt wall and wall, it swerved in its course, hesitated, and then fell harmless to the ground, dead and without power. The charm that had caused it to chop to and fro had failed. I touched it lightly with my forefinger, and it did not stir; I handled it yet more familiarly and it moved not. It was a long blade, long as the hall was broad, somewhat rusty and ill-looking it was for lack of armourer's care, yet sharp withal and of a fine temper.

"Yea," I thought, "the magic of the devil, thy smith, hath left thee, thanks be to God, for truly thou art an evil device and an unholy;" and, as in a dream, I saw myself springing into the air, till at last, weak and feeble, I could spring no more; and what I then

perceived caused me to shudder anew. I went from the prostrate blade back to the green tile and trod upon it with the end of one foot, and the long knife quivered like an animal wounded in the chase and a-dying, yet it stirred not from the ground. "Magic blade that art no longer magic, thy strength is gone!" I said aloud, and with that I broke off the end of the sword with my two hands, that were protected by a cloth I had taken from one of the couches that stood around. I stooped and sweated, and my face was purple, yet, ere I had done, the huge blade was in five pieces, and powerless to do further harm.

It was with a greater thirst than before that Satan and I sped downhill to the stream. Here we drank our fill, and it was good to be once more out in the open air under the free sky, with naught to fear and no care at our hearts. The rest of that day we sat in

the cool shade of a wood, listening to the apes and birds of coloured plumage that chattered in the trees.

Satan, the black cat, lies dead and unburied in a strange land, and no human eye marked his death. His last hour was perchance the most evil in both our lives, and maybe in that hour I had no thought for him or he for me; yet now, in my security, I think daily on him, and there rise tears to my eyes, for he was dear to me and I to him, and the dangers that we shared together I shall never forget. In the night I again ascended the hill and wandered around and about the castle, for a spirit of unrest possessed me and I could not sleep. No light was visible from any window, and all was black and inanimate as before. On the round window of the turret the same patch of moonlight silvered the pane, yet there was no moon in the skies, naught but an army of stars, wondrous

bright and near to earth, as are the stars of all distant lands.

Later I slept deep, yet, ere my eyes closed, I had pondered much over that patch of moonlight on the round window of the turret; for albeit there was no moon visible in the sky, a moon-ray pale and argentine it most certainly was that I had seen, and I resolved that I would ascend to the turret and seek to discover from whence sprang this strange light that had so puzzled me.

On the morrow Satan and I once more set out for the storeroom in search of meat. Again we ate our fill, and our appetites were very great and pressing. From this chamber there led underground a stone stairway that we afterwards descended, cautiously, and one foot moving slow after the other. The walls of this stairway were damp and mildewed, and when we reached the cellar below the air was

humid and lifeless as a stagnant tarn. There were holes in the walls, through which streamed pale rays of light, so that we discovered the nature of this underground chamber without great mystery or labour. Underfoot was the naked earth without flagstone or paving, and, on all sides, stretched a huge crypt, a ceiling of many curves supported by numberless pillars. At Canterbury Cathedral, where lie the bones of St. Thomas à Becket, is just such a crypt, though vaster far than the one Satan and I explored that morning. There were many casks about us, and goodly flasks of glass and earthenware that held rich wines and oils; also were there quaintly-painted chests filled with the dried leaf of some unknown plant. I drank sparingly of the rich wines that we had discovered, tasting of many sorts and colours; and each was of a quality rarer and more costly than any liquor

I had drunk before. The dust and cobwebs lay thick on all that was about us, and I thought that few men had drunk wine of so old a vintage; yet, because of the sorcery that was all about us, I restrained my natural desires and forbode to drink more than I could carry without detriment to my reason and good sense, knowing full well that I should want all the wits I was possessed of, even on that day as on the previous days.

Further on in this great cellar was a space with a palisade of wood all about it, and within were barrels, two or three of which had their heads stove in, so that their contents were spread on the ground beside them. I climbed the palisade and Satan pressed with his body through the bars.

"Gunpowder, as I live!" I cried, fingering the black grains that strewed the ground. I had no great use of so dangerous a neighbour, and yet,

thought I, " If the sorceries and dangers with which I am hourly beset cease not, maybe I shall lose patience and send this castle and all its witchcrafts a-flying into the air;" for I looked not upon this store of gunpowder with dread, as some men might have done, but as an ally, for stood it not at my service as much as at the use of any other man? Satan and I then proceeded further through the crypt-like cellar, and at the further end was yet another stairway. This we ascended as carefully as was our wont, and soon we were standing in a vast apartment that we had heretofore been unaware of. This new chamber was quite unlike any of the others through which we had passed, being bare and huger than any dwelling-room, with a ceiling high and vaulted; indeed, it was in shape more like the inside of a church than a room in a nobleman's palace. In this chamber were anvils and

moulds, and furnaces empty and idle; here also were strange machines whose uses I could in no way surmise; and all these things were rusty and red, and discoloured with unuse. This chamber reminded me of a vast smithy, only it was of another and a more cunning nature than any smith's shop that I had ever seen. Around the walls were shelves whereon stood great jars and caskets, and there were chests that had drawers that were filled with carpenter's stores,—screws and nails and gimlets and files and rivets. There were also boxes full of thin sticks of wood with a red substance at their end, and I rubbing two such together, they burst into flame. Then I bethought me of the gunpowder in the cellar below, and I put a box of these fire-makers in my pouch, so that I could act at a short notice.

I marvelled greatly at the long rows of jars, many of which were of glass,

so that I could see that they were filled with coloured liquids, and all of them bore inscriptions in a strange tongue—for a strange tongue it must have been, the words being written with English characters, yet conveying no meaning to me as I spelt them out. From one such a jar I took the cover, and there arose a smell most nauseous, so that I had much ado that I might not vomit. Yet one more jar did I uncover, and there arose fumes into the air about me, ruddy brown in colour, and of an evil quality, so thick and foul that I was nigh suffocated when these vapours entered at my mouth. There was a large doorway at the end of the chamber, and to this both Satan and I scampered quick. We opened it, and before us was the forsaken garden that was about the castle. We stood long on the threshold, exceeding thankful for air that was pure and of good odour.

The gateway through which we had passed opened out on to the back of the castle, and before us lay the tangled desolation of the garden that had fallen to such lamentable decay. There were seats and arbours, all moss-grown and scarcely recognisable, and we sat us down and pondered over the things that were about us, marvelling much how it was that they were there, and how it was that their present plight was so lonesome and untended.

" 'Tis like the fable of the Brier Rose, friend Satan," I said, as I scratched the top of his head, and then I smacked my lips together. " Maybe I shall kiss the princess," I continued, " and she will awake and chide me for a hairy-faced varlet." My hand was on my chin and I could feel my beard grown long and thick, and never a barber's shop would I, Silas Fordred, enter for many a long

day. My hair, too, was long and unkempt, and truly had a princess gazed on me, I fear greatly that she would have turned on her side and essayed to sleep once more.

With such like thoughts I wandered through the tangled bushes and network of creeping plants, that plucked at my feet and tripped me up, while the green tendrils tapped at my face and curled round my fingers, filling the air with a moist odour, somewhat rank, yet not unpleasing. We had proceeded thus slowly for some hundreds of yards, when we came to an open space where stood three buildings that had closed doors. Each of these structures was of stone, low in the roof and of simple form, and, from their shape, it was easy to tell that they consisted of but a single chamber. These we passed and repassed with much curiosity, but by now we had grown prudent and slow of action—

aye, even fearful,—so that we were content to return to the woods as on the previous day, to idle away the time and bethink us of the morrow.

It was quite silent in the wood, save for the stirring of leaves and the cries and motions of bird and beast, and Satan sat on blissfully at my side, with his head resting on his outstretched paws. On a sudden, however, the black cat rose to his feet with hair erect and his body forming an archway, while his claws came forth from their sheath.

"What is it, friend Satan?" I cried. I looked in the direction of his eyes, and true, there was cause for alarm. Gazing straight at us, and some little distance away, was a man all naked and hairy, as is an ape.

I rose to my feet and saw that he had no weapon. This gave me some courage, so that I called aloud:

"Hairy man! who art thou, and what wouldst thou?"

He made no answer, and there was a look of terror on his face — 'twas brown in colour, of a somewhat lighter hue than a Negro's.

"Come hither, thou man-ape," I said, loud and clear.

He gave a shrill cry, and then turning round he fled into the wood. I followed as fast as I was able, yet this hairy man was lithe and agile as is a greyhound, so that ere I had run many yards I had lost all trace of him. Breathless I returned to Satan, the cat.

"Eater of man's flesh," I said, "we be not alone. Perchance this is a land of hairy men—and sorcerers."

Satan, the cat, purred his agreement.

"We must watch and wait," said I, "and heaven above will help us; for, cat, though thy hue be black, thou hast borne thee like a true Christian," and I drew him toward me and rubbed his black face against my cheek with much affection.

That day we saw no more of the hairy man, nor did we see other man or woman of like breed and nature. In the night, as I gazed upward to the castle on the hill, the patch of silver light was again visible on the turret window. I resolved that on the next day I would ascend the stairway and explore the tower, which as yet I had not entered; for there was no moon in the sky, and I marvelled greatly as to the why and how of that patch of silver light that shone each night on the turret window without apparent cause or natural source.

Chapter III

ON the morrow Satan and I set out for the store-room, whither we daily hied for meat and sustenance. It was a dismal day, with a dark sky, from which the rain fell in thick sheets, so that we ate more than we needed and drank our fill, aye, and more than our fill, of the wine in the cellar below. I remember well that I emptied a flask of red and a flask of yellow, and yet another flask of red; for the leaden sky had made me sorrowful and the warm wine brought me comfort. By noon I had driven all care from my heart, and I was singing ribald songs and a-sitting on the floor with Satan, whom I had made to drink his fill of wine from a platter.

"Satan, old crow," I cried, "'tis a goodly tavern; wilt pay the reckoning?"

He came towards me, yet not in a straight line but in a curve: the face he wore was not his own, 'twas more like the face of a stupid sheep; for the liquor had reached his brain, and his head and limbs were unsteady.

"Thou drunken knave," I cried, "get thee hence; no denier hast thou with which to pay what glasses thou hast burst! Out, thou black tinker!" and with that we fell into each other's arms and rolled on the floor, together and wondrous happy.

'Twas then that I bethought me of the turret and the silver moonlight I had seen on its window these last three nights.

"Friend Beelzebub," said I to my companion, "We two will venture to the tower and see what it holds—perchance a duplicate moon; marry, thou roistering puss, up on to thy four legs, and do thou lead the way!"

Together we struggled out into the

hall and then upstairs till we came to a doorway that opened on to a winding staircase that, as I rightly surmised, led to the chamber in the turret.

Well I remember how we wound round this last flight; the steps were of stone, and we held on to the damp walls, muttering to ourselves and ever and anon laughing aloud; for the wine was hot in our heads, and our legs went one way and our bodies another. At length we reached the stairway head, and I threw open a brass-studded door. Before us was a round apartment, the floor littered with huge folios, while a red curtain of heavy silk hung from floor to ceiling at the further end. On entering this chamber we were greeted by a cry, shrill and uncanny as the shriek of a night bird. I looked about me, and there rose from a low chair an aged crone, bent well-nigh double, with a lifeless face, and long wisps of hair that were a pale yel-

low from age. Two long teeth, brown as toasted almonds, projected on either side of her mouth, while on her chin sprouted a fine beard that I plucked as I looked into her face and drew her toward me. Her eyes were small, malevolent, and like beads of glass.

"What make you up here, old hag?" I said, holding tight to her beard so as to make sure of her face, for most things that were about me I could see double, aye, and some threefold. She laid her hand — 'twas dry and lean, with thick black veins — on my arm, and hissed with rage as does a serpent, trying with feeble force to disengage her beard.

"What make you up here, old witch, spells and sorcery?" I asked once more. Then I turned to Satan that had dwelt with the witch: "Knowest thou this lady?" I said, with a thick voice. The black cat shrunk to my side, marvellous steady

and sober. "Satan, thou that I bought of a witch, thou that knowest the ways of sorcerers, is it safe to let this old crone live, or shall I hurl her from the turret window?" And with that I drew the hag yet closer towards me, and made as if to execute my threat.

"Indeed, kind sir, 'twas not I," she whined.

"Dost speak the English tongue?—aye, I forgot thou art a witch and speak all tongues."

"Indeed, sweet sir, I have done thee no harm; prithee release my beard!"

"'Twas not you?" I burst out. "You have done me no harm? Then you know what devil's work has gone forward under this roof, Hag of the Turret? Was the sword that flashed under my heels of thy forging?"

"Indeed, kind sir," she whimpered, "I had no power over that blade, nor

over the bronze hand on the gateway. I fear these things even as you fear them. I am but an old woman, and no witch; pray, kind sir, release your hold on my beard, for the pain is great."

"Heaven help you, if you lie," I said, and I loosed my hold.

She fell back muttering to herself in a strange tongue, and her glance was that evil and malevolent that I shuddered at sight of so terrible a visage.

I turned to friend Satan, who, in spite of temporary calmness, was heavy with wine. He lay now on the floor of the chamber asleep and breathing hard from his nostrils, so that I could see his moustachios bend and sway.

"Arouse thee, friend Satan," I cried, treading with my foot on his back. "And thou, old hag, beware!"

I strode several times round the chamber, turning over the huge volumes that were strewn about and of which I could understand no word,

though I be a good scholar, having been intended as a boy for the priesthood, and I had studied hard till the day that I quitted the monastery for the ocean that had the greater attraction for me. I stood before the circular window that I had gazed on from below, and on the other side of the turret was another window of the same shape and size. We were high up above the earth, and I could see across wood and meadow-land far away to the sea, and wherever I looked stretched the blue of the distant ocean.

"'Tis an island, this land of brazen idols and bearded hags, eh, old snake? and what may be its name?" I cried.

"It hath no name," she said.

"And thy name?"

"I have none."

"Then, Hag of the Turret shalt thou be called henceforth. Come thou below to the cellar and we will celebrate thy christening."

I laid my hand on her shoulder, and I felt that she was shaking with fear under my palm. I am not of a cruel disposition and I was moved.

"Have no dread," I cried; "so long as thy conduct is harmless and of good report thou art safe. I am neither witch nor sorcerer; naught but a plain seaman, Silas Fordred, master-mariner of Hythe."

She scowled at me most bad-humonredly.

"I love seamen, they are brave and free as the ocean," said the witch.

"Aye, thou lovest them as did the Syrens. I know thy love and will none of it."

"You mock me because I am old and withered; 'tis not generous, Silas Fordred, master-mariner of Hythe,—'tis not generous, nor is it brave."

"Get thee back to thy spells and incantations," and I looked at the great tomes that were spread about the

room. "Yet stay," I continued: "whence comes the patch of moonlight that I see nightly on thy window-pane?"

For answer she pressed a spring in the wall, and, as I live, there burnt in a globe of glass above our heads a pale thread of light, white as a moon-ray.

"A strange lamp is this, aye, and another of thy sorcerer's tricks; take care that it works no harm."

"An innocent device," she protested, "and simple."

"'Tis well; mark what I have said, and now good-day, and mind thou keepest to thy turret; for should I meet thee below, I will spit thee like a woodcock on one of thine own swords."

She scowled most evilly, the thin lips curling inward over her toothless gums, while the two fangs at the corners pressed down on her withered chin.

"Come, friend Satan," said I, stir-

ring the weary cat with my foot, "let us away."

Together we descended the stairway, and the brass-studded door closed over our heads; then downhill to the stream that bordered the wood, to idle through the long afternoon as best we might.

Thus, stretched at our ease, we thought over the day's events, and what they might bode. The hairy man of the yesterday came not within our ken, nor did we see further trace or sign of thing human, so there was naught to disturb our reflections. In the night-time the pale light glowed on the round window-pane as before, and not many hours after sunset we slept, greatly tired from the wine and the day's excitements, till late into the next day.

After our usual meal, and we drank sparingly this time, we again ascended to the turret and held converse with

the witch. This we did for lack of other employment and because the time hung heavy on our hands. We stayed and spoke with her till both Satan and I were wearied with fruitless discourse; then downstairs again wishing we had kept to our own company.

Our condition was most lonesome, and, after awhile, we wandered in the forsaken garden, for 'twas much like ourselves, and there is a wondrous sympathy 'twixt things animate and things inanimate be they in a like plight and condition. Yea, and even though we were silent and without power of comforting the other with speech, I saw in this neglected garden much that spoke to me in sympathy and tried hard to soothe my heavy heart; for it seemed to me as though the uncared plants felt what I felt, and, had they had utterance, they would have voiced my own thoughts. Even

the insects and bugs that crawled from leaf to leaf were in a less pitiable plight than this forsaken garden and myself, and, when I had thought and pitied myself awhile, there were tears on my cheek that rolled onto the fur of Satan, my friend, and made round spots on his coat that were more shiny than what was dry.

As I sat thus thinking of gloomy things, I bethought me of the three buildings with the closed doors, and I resolved once more to visit them; for anything was a distraction in my present plight, and I saw no danger in this survey of stones and mortar.

The sun was high in the afternoon sky, that was a deep hard blue, and so clear was the air that each leaf and flower stood clear-cut and separate, as though hewn in coloured stone.

When we reached the open space where stood the three chambers, we found that they were as before, with

but one slight difference. The doors of the first two were closed, but the third door stood open to my gaze. I bethought me of the Hag of the Turret, and wondered greatly whether the open door was her doing. I looked into the chamber, for there was naught to hinder me, and before my eyes was spread a rich feast laid out in vessels of beaten gold, such vessels as the ones that I had brought from thence, and that I have shewn you at my house in Stade Street. There were broad dishes and platters, and flasks and goblets, yellow and ashine, that made my fingers to itch and ache. It was foolish of me to wish for gold at that time; for what use had I for wealth in a land where there was none to buy or sell with but a bent crone and a man all hairy?

On one dish was a boar's head, on another a swan, and there were all manner of rich meats and fair jellies

and fruits, that called to mind the dainties that I have heard tell are eaten by the Lord Mayor of London and his Aldermen each ninth day of November.

Satan too looked at the rich feast, and, without more ado, he ran inside and began to eat from a huge pasty, and he coming to no harm, I lost fear and followed, for I had eaten no cooked food for many days, and the banquet enticed me greatly.

Boldly I entered and laid my hand on a fine peach. As I touched it the fruit crumbled to dust in my fingers; while behind me the door closed fast with a thud, and I was in black darkness, with only Satan's eyes for a lamp. The air about me, which at first was sweet and pure, grew thick and noxious, and there pressed a great weight on my chest so that it was hard to breathe, and I stood there in the darkness thinking that my last hour was come, and wondering whether I

had best bestir myself and see if there was no chance of escape. I gathered together all my strength, and breathed but rarely and through my nostrils; while Satan, the cat, whined piteously at my side. I tore at the walls with my hands, but they were firm and pitiless; and vainly I sought to find the door that had closed and shut out all the light, for there were no windows to this chamber, and the darkness was black and endless.

The thick nauseous air grew heavier and heavier, and now my eyes burnt fit to drop from out my head, while my tongue clove to my mouth and felt parched and dry, like to a piece of smoked meat. My limbs grew heavy and without strength, and the great vein on my forehead beat like a Nuremberg time-dial. I was afraid to pray, for the thick air would have entered at my lips and choked me the faster. Satan, the cat, had ceased to whine,

the green light in his eyes glowed no longer, and, as my foot stirred him, I felt that he was as lead, heavy and without life. All was silent, save for the noises in my head, and the low hiss of the rank gas that issued form somewhere under my feet. On a sudden, a long shrill laugh, fiendish and diabolic, pierced the silence, and then another and yet another. I ceased my efforts to escape, and stood still and intent, trying to gather from whence came this burst of merriment. The sound was somewhat distant, and as I listened, the laughter ceased, and the shrill voice burst into a cackling chant, that it intoned in some strange tongue.

"It must be someone in the garden without," I thought; "most likely it is the Hag of the Turret;" whereupon I resolved, should I outlive this hour, to strangle her with my thumbs and fingers, aye, and without speech or question.

Quick these thoughts and many others galloped through my brain, and all the time I was sinking, slowly sinking. My heart still beat, and wondrous loud too; but my body was weary and without strength. I swayed and I staggered, for I could breathe no more, and my head was going round and round like the wheel of a cart; then I fell, clutching on my way the carving of a stone that projected some inches from the wall at my side. Well I remember that fall and the hopeless sense of the end of all things that came with it; then I recollect, even better and with a greater zest, how I reached that thrice blessed piece of carving, that for one moment stayed my fall, and how stone and carving moved under my hand, making a crevice in the wall, so that there cut through the darkness a thin blade of light, while a million dust atoms danced merrily in line 'twixt the cleft and the paving.

The stone that I held was loose, and the mortar about it decayed; the cool draught of air played on my face, giving me fresh courage, so that with might and main I pulled and pushed at that heaven-sent stone so that at last it fell to the ground outside the chamber, whilst the daylight and God's own blessed air did enter like unto two glorious angels.

As the stone fell to earth with a thud I heard yet another sound, a cry of rage and lamentation. I put my head through the hole I had made so that I might breathe more freely and rid my entrails of the nauseous gas, and the garden was around me as before. I was too busy with my own bodily affairs to pay much heed to the cry that I had heard and the anger that was in the voice, yet, as once more I felt alive and somewhat vigorous, I looked hard about me, and through the bushes and tangle of the garden I made

out the aged crone of the turret hobbling homewards, a-shaking of her staff and muttering in her beard.

As the air from without rushed into the dark chamber, behold, and I have sworn it, the door once more opened wide, and without help from me or human being, and again there was light in the room, so that I could see the body of Satan, the cat, that was quite dead; also could I see the feast and the vessels of gold. Now, with all haste I seized four goblets, a great flask, six broad dishes, and nine platters, these being all that I could carry, I being then a weak man and overweary; and with these I ran into the open and sank down on my knees, praying a prayer of my own making that rose to my lips from out my heart of hearts. Afterwards I bethought me of the black cat that I had left behind me, and further, it seemed unwise were I to return for his body, he being

dead and beyond the reach of human aid.

As I thought of my friend, Satan, the cat, a great rage seized upon me, for he had been to me a dear companion during some of the longest days that I have ever lived through—trusting and large-hearted he had been, of unchanging mood and warm affections, and the Hag of Turret it was that had wrought this murder! I was athirst for revenge, yet somewhat feeble from my recent adventure, and, though my first impulse was to run straight up to the turret and fling the curst witch from the window, yet I thought I would wait till the morrow ere I wrought this justice. I was greatly weary both in mind and body, so that taken unawares my wits would have been too feeble to meet cunning by cunning, and my body too weary to bear any encounter that called for overmuch exertion.

Alone and by myself back to the wood I hied with my golden dishes, and these I hid secure in a spot that I could well remember, 'twas under the roots of a great tree. I was on my knees engaged in this business, when suddenly I looked about me, and behold, the hairy man of two days before was a-watching of me with much curiosity. Straightway I arose and advanced towards him, but he stepped back as at our first meeting. I stood still and waited for him to speak. There was no great fear on his face as there had been when we had first encountered the other, yet no one word did he say, only clenched his hairy fist and pointed with his other arm in the direction of the castle, uttering strange sounds and grinding his teeth together till the noise pained me.

"Thou too knowest the witch?" I asked, and I bent my back as the Hag of the Turret bent her back, and I

pulled at my beard and pointed to the sides of my mouth so as to call to his mind the two fangs of the witch.

He understood my meaning, for he smiled and shook his head up and down; then he sprang high into the air and trod hard with his feet on the earth, as if to stamp the life out of some prostrate body.

"Aye, we will trample her to death, and worse, far worse!" I cried.

For answer this hairy man neighed like a horse, and then ran away into the wood without sign or word.

I turned to my gold platters, that were still where I had placed them, and I marvelled much at the strange conduct of this hairy heathen that ran all naked in the wood, and hated the witch with as great a hatred as mine own. All the while my head ached sore and my eyes smarted, and, had I possessed a mirror, I would have seen that they were red. I was not easily rid of the

noxious gas that I had breathed, and at sunset I laid me down to rest, somewhat sick of body and greatly weary and worn out.

It was yet more lonesome than before to lie thus lone and companionless, and often in the night I awoke, and, wondering at the emptiness of my arms and missing the familiar breathing at my side, I cried aloud: "Satan, old friend, where stay you?" till I remembered that he had been slain by black magic, and that on the morrow I would up to the turret and slay the hag that dwelt there, without question or other word.

Chapter IV

THERE was little of mercy and little of sweetness in my heart when I next ascended the stairway that led to the chamber where dwelt the Hag of the Turret. Three steps did I take at a time, and in my right hand was a sword of good steel, the best of those that hung on the walls in the great hall below. Carefully I had sharpened and ground the edge, and there was little flesh that was human that the keen blade would not divide.

Well I remember how my eyeballs were aflame with hatred and lust of blood, how my throat was hard and dry and my teeth firm set. There was no softness in me as I thought of the

woman's years and helpless state, and swiftly the stone stairs fell back under the spring of my stride. She had sought to kill me—I that had done her no wrong,—and my cat, Satan, she had slain with as black a cunning as any that I had as yet encountered. The blood of Thomas Snoad cried loud for vengeance, and the grip on my sword-hilt tightened at the thought of how it would cleave and make a parting in the yellow wisps of hair, then downward to the chin through the coarse beard — and the Hag of the Turret would work no more evil, whatever else might befall.

I flung open her chamber door, and she advanced to meet me with the same cunning smile that was her wonted mask. Then she read the message in my eyes and in my hand, and down at my feet she flung herself, sore afraid and trembling.

"Speak!" she cried. "Nay, look

not at me thus! What have I done? What is my fault?"

I made no answer to her question.

"I give thee one minute's grace for prayer," said I; "and pray thy hardest, for afterwards thou shalt die a swift death."

Again she asked me for reason and explanation of my harsh conduct, but I uttered no word. Still I stood with lowered blade, counting the seconds till I should have counted sixty. The last ten I spoke aloud, so that the torture and the suspense might be the greater.

"Fifty-seven!" I said. "Fifty-eight!"—I hardly knew my own voice, 'twas that stern and hard. "Fifty-nine!" "Six——" I began, but stopped short, for the hag had sprung to her feet, and with a terrible cry as of a wild panther at bay, she crossed the room to where hung on the wall the heavy curtain of red silk.

"Don Diego, my father, I crave thy help!" she cried aloud, and her voice shrieked high and unearthly — such a voice as neither human man nor woman has ever heard or uttered. With her lean hand she drew aside the curtain, and there stood before me a man with coal-black eyes, so hard, so piercing, that they froze the blood in my veins, and the marrow in my back so that I was held fast, and stood still and rigid, as I have seen birds pause, fixed and motionless, when held fast by the glassy eyes of a serpent. The naked blade dropped from my ice-cold hand on to the floor, for I was transfixed and rendered without strength; and perforce had I to gaze and yet gaze more, with both my eyes sealed fast to the eyes of this apparition.

I recall this new figure well, and, indeed, with good reason. 'Twas a man of middle age, clad in black velvet, and

with a bare head. The face I shall never forget; so proud, so fierce, so saturnine was its expression that even now, with eyes closed, I can see it as distinct to-day as I could on that, our first and last encounter. The complexion was dark, swarthy as that of a Spaniard; on the chin was a peaked beard, and the hair on the man's head was coal-black; yet beyond all stood out the two eyes that held me fast as if by magic.

Thus stood I, spellbound and unable to stir hand or foot, and round me walked the bent hag, gleeful of mood, rubbing her two hands round about each other, and mewing with pleasure like some great cat. For awhile she hovered round about me, enjoying to the full my discomfiture; then, from a chest, she brought out a mirror, and for an instant she held it 'twixt me and the coal-black eyes that gripped mine own. The face that I saw was ghastly

white under my brown beard, on my brow stood glassy beads of sweat, the lines of fear made my face lowly and mean, and mine eyes were wide open and without life or power. She withdrew the mirror, and once again I was spellbound by the sable figure with the evil glance.

"Shall I draw the curtain?" she whispered in my ear.

"Yes."

There was no sound, but she marked the words on my lips.

"You have seen sufficient; would you not like yet one more look?"

She held the silk in her bony hand.

"No! for the sake of the Virgin—"

The words stuck in my throat for I was hoarse with terror.

"Swear thou wilt leave me in peace, and never more enter this chamber!"

"I swear!"

I would have sworn away my hopes

of life and Heaven in that moment, so empty was I of power and courage.

"Now go!" she cried, and the curtain was drawn once more over those hell-born eyes. Her hand still clutched the silk, and at any moment the man in black might once more stand before me.

Hastily I turned to the doorway, yet before I left the chamber she held the mirror once more before my face; but all that I saw was a mist on the glass, and there was no reflection either of my face or aught else.

Fearfully I sprang down stairs, in haste and as though pursued by ten million devils, for had I not been on the near confines of hell and gazed on what no human eye ever was fashioned to gaze upon? For the eyes in my head were without true sight, and all before them was yellow and formless, as though I had stared into the face of the sun and been blinded by its glare.

Terror-struck and abject, I kept far away from the castle till such time as hunger forced me to the store-room and the cellar. To drown my fear and anguish, I drank deeper on that day than I have ever drunk before or since. My head was afire and my gait haphazard when, with a flask of red wine under each arm, I once more set out for my lair in the woods. As I passed through the great hall my attention was aroused by a mirror, alike in form and size to the one that the Hag of the Turret had held before my face in the morning. It lay on one of the couches.

"There will be no fearsome face all white and chattering now," said I thickly, and I could feel the wine burning under my skin. My heart was light and careless, and I picked up the mirror and gazed into it; an instant later I had dashed it to the ground, where it splintered into a thousand

fragments; for by all Heaven and earth, I had gazed at the same terror-torn face, all white and bloodless, that I had seen reflected in this very mirror when it was held up between my eyes and the apparition that was in the turret behind the heavy curtain of red silk!

Hastily I left the castle and wandered to a seat in the forsaken garden, where I thought and quaked anew, for the courage that the wine had lent me was all but fled, and I was as a child that has been burnt to the bone and is once more face to face with the fire, only 'twas Sorcery that I stood in awe of, and I had suffered o'ermuch from it. As I sat thus trembling in all my four limbs, may I be lost in the deepest pit if the curst witch did not find me out and make mock of me!

"Silas Fordred, master-mariner of Hythe, where be thy courage and thy cunning now? Ha! ha!" and she laughed long and high in her throat.

I said no word, and my chin was on my chest, that weary and spent was I.

"It was not well to threaten, aye, and seek to slay an old woman that had done thee no harm! Even if thy evil planning had succeeded it would not have been well; the Hag of the Turret would not have died unavenged, for thou art but a man—a weak, common man,—with naught but brute strength and a cowardly heart!"

"Get thee away! I have suffered enough, so leave me in peace!"

"Not yet, I have not done with thee yet. Come with me and I will show thee a brave sight."

"Away old hag, or I shall do thee harm!" I cried.

She laughed all around her mouth, showing her toothless gums, and the roots of the two brown fangs that were on either side. Her hand went to her girdle, and I could see the gleam of a blood-red stone above her fingers

that were clutching the hilt of a long dagger.

"Come! you will come?" she pleaded, for now her voice took on a wheedling tone; and she turned in the direction of the three chambers that stood separate and side by side with closed doors.

I followed her. Heaven alone knoweth why I rose to my feet at her behest and went the same way as she. All I can say is that I had a lurking hope in my heart that something of chance or justice might deliver her into my hands, and then——

"You come! you obey me, Silas Fordred! Do you hope to push me across the threshold of the Dark Chamber, eh?" and her hand went significantly to the dagger-hilt with the great ruby at its head.

She had read the thought of vengeance from my face, and silently I vowed I would think no more; but,

when the fit moment arrived, I would act, and she should die whatever dog's death she had intended for me.

By now we had reached the three chambers, and, as once before, and that on a memorable occasion, two of the doors were closed and the other stood wide open. Curiously I gazed within, the witch marking the direction of my eyes, and noting with a great satisfaction their expression of greed and lust of gain; for what I saw was a chamber full of wide-open chests, and caskets all full and over-running with coloured gems and coined gold. 'Twas like what I had seen in the windows of the Lombards that change moneys, only here were precious gems in such a plenty and gold pieces by the bushel and by the gallon; such wealth as I had never gazed on before—aye, and of whose mere existence I had not dreamed. Though I tried my hardest, I could not suppress all desire; and, as

my eyes lit up, the bearded hag noticed my thirst, and chuckled and made strange noises of satisfaction.

"'Tis some other devil's business, of that I have no doubt," said I inwardly, and calming myself I stood firm and cold before the doorway.

"Thou canst go and take what wealth that pleases thee," cried the hag in my ear.

I made no answer, but stood firm and at a good space from the doorway.

"Thou wilt have riches enough to purchase a whole county; thou wilt be able to build schools and churches, and thou wilt be the first commoner in all Hythe Borough, plain Master Silas Fordred the mariner."

I smiled disdainfully, the wine I had recently drunk coming once more to my aid.

"Nay, nay," I said. "I have had enough of thy riches and thy lures, I

will none of them!" and I turned on my heel.

"Surely, friend Silas," she cried, "thou art but a fool, and not the clever knave that I mistook thee for!"

"Aye, aye, that I know well, and more beside," said I with a smile, and moved away from her. She was greatly angered and the corners of her mouth twitched with suppressed rage. Still she hobbled after me, did this bent hag.

"Come back, friend Silas!" she called. "Come back and plunge both thy arms into this wealth; truly thou shalt come to no harm—nay more, I will enter with thee!"

"Thrice have I answered thee, and each time said I nay; let this be my last word and thine!" and I stood away from her with folded arms.

"Truly thou makest me impatient! Enter with me now, or never shalt thou enter the Chamber of Riches, and

a poor man shalt thou die, naked and with an empty belly!"

I said no word in reply.

"Never in all thy life shalt thou enter!" she hissed in my ear.

"Calm thyself, bent hag, calm thyself; thy conduct befits not thy years!" and I laughed aloud in her face, so that she grew a deep yellow with rage and hatred. With that I set off for the wood, and left her spitting and afume before the open doorway.

I had not gone many steps when I turned round and saw that she was on my heels, her lips white with passion, her expression more evil and menacing than I had as yet seen it, her eyes fierce and glittering as a hawk's.

"Thou wilt enter yon doorway, Silas Fordred!" she cried, and beat on the ground with her staff.

"I will not, thou moth-eaten fury! get thee to the devil!" and I laughed aloud in her face.

Her yellow visage changed to a deep orange, and great veins stood out on her lean cheeks and forehead.

"Thou wilt enter yon chamber, that I swear, either alive or else dead! but enter yon chamber thou shalt!" and her voice choked short in her neck.

"I shall not!" said I, quite cold.

"Thou shalt!" she shrieked. I smiled broad into her face, so that, losing all prudence and all self-command, she spat and boiled at the mouth, hissing like a serpent in pain.

I watched her with an indifferent eye.

"Thou shalt enter!" she cried; "living or dead, thou shalt enter!" and so saying she snatched the dagger from her girdle and flew at me in a fury of hate and bitter rage.

Well I remember how the long, lean blade flashed 'twixt my face and the sky, and how, an instant later, I had her wrist tight in my two hands; then there was a noise as of a twig snap-

ping, and the bone of her arm, dry and brittle with age, broke into two pieces, while I fell forward as the strain gave way. Quickly I arose to my feet, and she was at me again, yet this time the dagger lay on the ground, and she came to me with wide-open mouth, the brown fang on either side bare to the roots; the fingers of her one hand were apart and curved like claws, and the other arm hung loose at her side, the lower half flapping idly to and fro as she moved. Like to a tigress, with the white froth on her parted lips, she sprang at me, and I, mad with hate and rage, forced my one hand through her wide open jaws, while with the other I clasped her lean legs at the bend. High I held her in the air and ran thus, she swinging above my head, hissing and writhing with pain and hatred. High above my head she twisted and turned, and then I flung her with all my strength, whirled her

clean and clear through the wide-open doorway of the Chamber of Riches, where were the coloured jewels and the chests of gold. As the lean shanks were freed and my hands drew across the toothless gums, the two fangs on the sides of her mouth snapped short and fell at my feet, while overhead there swished through the air that cursed Hag of the Turret, to light with all force amid the gold and precious gems. To earth she fell with a rattling sound, and that was the last I saw or ever shall see of her lean carcase, for, in the self-same moment as she touched ground, a broad sheet of flame, yellow as the gold within, filled the entire chamber, dropped from ceiling to floor a curtain of fire. I gazed breathless and awestruck at this spectacle, yet with a keen joy in my heart as I thought of the Hag of the Turret, who must now be roasting within as later she would broil in Hell. For the

space of ten seconds the broad flame licked and waved, then it expired and all was clear and simple as before, only the Hag of the Turret was nowhere to be seen, and for that I thanked God and His Son and the Blessed Virgin.

At my feet, that had left deep marks in the turf by reason of my last great effort, were the two yellow fangs that had broke short on my hand. These I picked up and placed carefully within my pouch as a remembrance of the She-fiend from whose mouth they had dropt; and you, who have seen them at my house in Stade Street can now understand why I troubled to bring home with me ivory of so worthless a nature.

I knelt long and devoutly, praying to the God that had rid me of so curst a companion, voicing my thanks with much direct and grateful speech; and, even when I could no more think of fitting phrases, I still knelt with closed

eyes, as my thanks swelled in my heart and spoke for me—aye, and perhaps with a sweeter tongue than the bald utterances which were all that so simple a man as myself could think of and weave into a prayer. At length, these devotions and some tears having eased my heart, I looked up, and in front of me and on all fours was the hairy man looking humbly into my face. As our glances met, he pranced around like a colt that is out at pasture, put his face to the ground and placed my hand to his head, so that I wondered whether he did not mistake me for a priest and was seeking my blessing. I knew that he had seen me at prayer, and that, perchance, I had misled him into holding that I was a priest.

"I am no friar," I cried, "but plain Silas Fordred, master-mariner of Hythe, that suffered shipwreck on this accursed island some months since."

The hairy man spoke not, but, instead, he made strange noises as do the beasts of the forest, and signs with his arms like unto a negro trader.

Once more he pressed my hand to his head, and he was about to lay his cheek against my feet, when I arose with some choler.

"Hairy man," said I, "thou art little better than a fool! Bear thee as a man, and not as a dog that has been lately whipped!"

Yet again and for some time longer he pranced for joy, and pointed first to his eyes and then into the chamber with the wide-open door, wherein the witch had lately disappeared.

"Did'st see the somersault she turned?" I asked. "'Twas bravely done, aye, thou naked one?"

He recognised the cheery tone of my voice and once more skipped joyfully toward me, while I, somewhat weary of his too evident pleasure, smote him

heavily in the ribs, so that he was gratified, yet not too much so. After I had taken this precaution, he kept at a safe distance from me, and though ever and anon there came a smile into the corner of his eye, he ventured no more within reach of my foot or fist till his joy was of a calmer nature.

After awhile I went into the castle, the savage following close at my heel.

I had that day triumphed over the Hag of the Turret, and the presence of a companion—aye, even of a companion that spoke no real tongue, and, moreover, was hairy from head to toe, —had given me new hope and courage; so much so, that I resolved forthwith, and while my revived manhood was still hot within me, to mount the turret stairway and see whether I could not conquer the evil-eyed monster beyond the curtain, as I had conquered the hag, his friend.

I had read the story of David and

Goliath, and I was minded to meet this foe even as the Hebrew Harpist had met the Philistine; but I, having neither sling nor stone, took with me instead a heavy hammer of iron, which weapon I resolved to hurl at the evil one's head the moment that the hairy man, whom I should so instruct, had withdrawn the curtain.

Stealthily, so as not to give alarm and warning to the black-browed Sorcerer overhead, we mounted the narrow stairway, and, with some catching at our breath, entered the doorway of the turret chamber. Within this deserted apartment was deep stillness, and at the far end hung the heavy curtain of red silk, lengthways, from ceiling to flagstone as before. With some trouble and after a great making of signs, I at length instructed my newfound ally in his duty, and at a signal from me the curtain was drawn aside, and quick, before the sinister face had

power to hold me, I flung the hammer at it with all my force. No sooner had the haft left my hand than a great fear seized upon me, and I closed my eyes, wondering what dire consequences would follow on my attack.

I stood in darkness many long seconds, expecting the turret to sway and topple to the earth—aye, yet stranger and more hurtful events and mischances did I think of,—yet through the stillness there came only one sound —the falling of a shower of splintered glass that recalled the breaking of the mirror that I had flung from me in the morning. I opened my eyes, and beyond the curtain that the hairy man still held to his side (and his face was in that moment a fine picture of varied humours) there was naught but an empty space, under which was inscribed in tall letters of ebony:

"DIGO RODRICOVEZ,"

and on the floor of the chamber lay a thousand fragments of glass. Many of these I stooped over and gazed at with much curiosity. Most of them were portions of a mirror, so that in their depths I caught glimpses of my own face; on others were patches of black velvet; and in one I met the ear and awful eye of the figure that had struck such terror into me on that self-same day. I put these pieces of glass aside and pondered, while all the time the hairy man stood awestruck and silent before me.

"Man of the furry hide," said I at last, "surely this was a mirror, much such an one as that which carried the imprint of my face this morning, and in it yon demon—and Heaven alone knoweth where and what he be—had gazed at some one time or another. His evil eye it was that, reflected in this glass, transfixed and held me motionless some few hours since. 'Twas

no real man that I saw, but a shadow wrought by black magic and strange crafts. The witch, praise be to Heaven, hath paid the price of her evil-doings, and there will be no new Sorcery on this island for many a long day!"

I looked at the tall letters of ebony once more and repeated them many times, marvelling greatly as to their meaning and significance. Then a thought came to me—one that I had strangely overlooked — that filled my breast and mind with new alarms: "If the mirror I had shattered held but a reflection of a Sorcerer, where was that Sorcerer's self, and might not he at any moment weave some new spell about me—aye, perchance at this present instant he might be planning my destruction?"

Many times I repeated the two ebon words "DIGO RODRICOVEZ," marvelling the while greatly as to what could be their meaning and significance.

From the turret we once more descended to the garden, where stood the chamber that was the tomb of the Hag of the Turret. The door was still wide open and the wealth within tempted me greatly, although I was well aware of the uselessness of riches in my present plight. Such is the force of custom and habit. I made my way from thence, resolved to let well alone and to touch naught else that might in any way tempt or cause me harm. I passed the third chamber, and this time a fresh doorway stood open, so that I could gaze and satisfy my curiosity. Now I saw clear into a room quaintly alight and all rosy as is a sunset, and within were lovely maidens that neither stirred nor spoke, clad in wondrous thin and gauzy garments, and of a marvellous fair complexion that the tender light made yet more strangely beautiful.

"Hairy man," said I, "let us

away; this is some new spell!" and I grasped his shoulder and the two of us strode hastily from the spot, onward through the garden. As I pressed forward past the place where I had struggled with the witch I made out something that glittered on the grass. What I picked up was the dagger that the hag had sought to kill me with, a long blade of Spanish steel, and at its hilt was a round ruby. This I stuck into my belt that I had lately taken from one of the rooms in the castle, for my own leathern girdle was still clenched by the brazen fist that swung on the castle doorwway. This knife you have seen in company with my other belongings, and such of you as are skilled in these matters can testify as to the fineness of the workmanship and the lustre of the precious stone at its head.

The dusk was fast approaching and the day was well-nigh sped. It had

been a day of great events and much danger and activity, and many a time within the last twenty-four hours had my heart stuck fast in my throat and my teeth chattered in my mouth, for it is not given to every man to perform deeds of valour without misgiving and inward qualms; nay more, I dare swear that the bravest hero—one that can face human enemies without knowing dread or fear—would have shrunk aghast at the black sorceries and other superhuman dangers wherewith I had that day done battle. Now my mind was somewhat at rest, maybe that it shared the same weariness that beset my body; also was my hunger great and my thirst of a similar quality. Long did the hairy man and I sit together in the store-room making a giant's supper, and my belt hung idly on my loins and I was scant of breath when I had done. My new-found ally sate beside me on the floor, eating with

great gusto and no little astonishment at the source of our meal; he, in common with myself, never before having seen flesh that was preserved in sealed tins, nor had he ever tasted wines and heady liquors of any sort till this same night. We drank wisely, and, in spite of the manifest danger of the action, fell asleep where we had eaten, this being the first night that I had spent under a roof since the day that I and Thomas Snoad set out from Hythe.

Chapter V

"HAIRY MAN!" said I next morning, as we rubbed our eyes and stretched our limbs, for we had slept deep, "henceforth thou shalt be known as Esau, a fitter name and a more ancient. Now, Esau, let us to breakfast, and afterwards we will hold a council and resolve on what measures we can take to quit this thrice accurst island, and all that it holds."

It was of little use, this converse with Esau; but it was good and cheering to hear the sound of my voice, and, when I spoke, my compañion smiled with over-great intelligence, although he understood no single word.

"Esau," said I, when our meal was done, and we had lain for some time

on the floor a-blinking upward at the roofing, " what shall we do now?"

I waited not for a reply, but continued:

" A ship we will build, even though it be but a small one, and in it we shall sail away from this witch-ridden land, where naught is safe or of good health."

Thereupon we arose, and made our way to the great room beyond the hall, the chamber that was like to a huge smithy. Here there were axes and saws and shipwright's tools in plenty; also a barrow with wheels and a light truck. These two carriages we filled with all manner of implements, and some sacks containing the smallware of our trade. On the canvas of one of these last was painted, strange to say, in a black lettering, *clavos de fierro*, words that signify ship's nails in the Spanish tongue, a language with which I am well acquainted from frequent

intercourse with the mariners of that great nation.

Three times in all did Esau and I make the journey, 'twixt the castle and the sea shore. After our first journey we built a rude hut wherein to place the contents of our barrow; also a somewhat stronger habitation that would give us shelter at night time; for I was o'erweary of sleeping in the open, exposed to rain and whatever wind and weather with which Providence might favour me.

Before we once more set our faces inland, we bathed and made merry in the sea, spending much such a day as do English townsfolk who go to the shore in summer-time.

All about us was unchanged, and the great bronze idol kept watch and ward over the coast, silent and passive as ever, while at its feet the bleached skeletons, all sundered in the middle, were strewn here and there. At sight

of the strange god the smile vanished from Esau's face, and he beat his head on the sand and made moan, and with clenched fist he cried aloud in the idol's face, and made deep noises in his throat that were his manner of cursing; so that I knew that he could be no worshipper of the great bronze god.

"It is well, friend Esau," said I, "and I am overjoyed to find thee not idolatrous and a heathen, as are most wild men."

After that we departed once more inland, and on our return to the shore we were laden with sheets and cloths that we had taken from the great beds, and wax and stout cords and threads, for we would have to make sails and shrouds for our mast. What space we had over we filled with the flesh that was in the sealed tins, and flasks of wine, and swords and spears from the great hall, with which weapons we hoped to slay many of the

birds and beasts in the woods, so that we might eat fresh meat every day.

All these goods were stowed carefully away in our hut, and then we set to work on our ship, hewing down trees in the woods, and labouring with great vigour from daybreak to dusk. In the evening when our work was done we would walk round the coast spying for a sail or sign of man, yet none such did we ever see; and always there confronted us the great bronze idol, with the thirteen white gems at its throat.

Now, one day when we had walked maybe half a league along the lonely strand, we chanced on what seemed to be a bower, and, as we came closer, we could see that what we had mistaken for an arbour was a long low house of wood with but three walls and a roof, all overgrown with moss and trailing plants. Carefully we approached, and walked round the house,

first on one side and then on the other, till we came to the front that faced the sea, the side that was open and had no wall, and here we discerned the prow of a small ship. The blood rushed to my face at the sight, and I ran forward in great haste so that my hands might feel what mine eyes had beheld. Of truth, it was a ship, wondrous light, yet of a marvellous secure build, as I that am a seaman could rightly vouch for, and as you that have seen it without my house in Stade Street can testify.

This strange vessel had neither mast, sail, nor oar. It was all open and bare, save but for a single cabin that was furnished for extreme comfort and ease, and, at the one end, the body of the vessel was made solid with wooden planking, atop of which were three handles of silver, wrought like the handles of a door. At first I feared that the ship was of witchcraft like unto the

other marvels that I had encountered in this island; neverthless, Esau and myself slept that night secure within the cabin, without evil dream or other harm, so that on the morrow I bethought me that this was of good omen, and, be the silver handles what they might, I would venture across the seas in this strange barque.

Under the ship was a wooden stage, long and broad, with wheels that I greased with the fat of a beast, so that, without great ado, Esau and I were able to float our new-found prize, and, with the oars that we had already fashioned, we rowed near a league along the shore without mishap, save that Esau, who was no waterman, did fall heavily backward more times than once. The last part of our journey was performed at some speed, for this barque was marvellously light, being mostly built of cork that weighs but little; and what steel and timber that

was used in its construction was of a fine quality, very strong, yet in nowise weighty.

Thankful was I that Providence had put in my path the thing that of all things I most desired; and now that we had a vessel, I resolved that we would put to sea with the least possible delay, and get us away from the heathen land where but to be alive was a great danger.

Yet, before we hoisted our sail to the winds and disappeared down the horizon, I resolved to make one last journey to the castle on the hill-top, for our stores of flesh and wine were getting low, and I had hidden my gold platters in the wood; and these I resolved to take with us, they being of great price.

Esau and I had made us a mast and a stout sail with all needful tackle in the shape of shrouds and sheets, and we had only to get provisions and

fresh water aboard before setting out to a port of safety.

Once more we went a-journeying with our two barrows through the woods and pasture lands that lay between the seashore and the castle. As ever, the brazen hand still clenched my girdle of leather and the gate stood wide open.

First of all we went down to my old lair in the woods and loaded the gold vessels into my barrow, and then we spent some time going to and fro with armfuls of provisions and flasks of wine till both our barrows could hold no more. This done, we had a farewell repast in the store-room, and we sat making merry till Esau suddenly sprang up and ran swiftly to the gateway; then he rushed madly downhill to the wood, signing with his head and arms that he would return ere sundown. Marvelling greatly as to the meaning of this sudden flight, I

watched him disappear in the foliage, and then for the last time I wandered through the castle. All was still as death and utterly deserted, and yet, thought I, as I sat in the great smith's shop, "It would be well were I to save other shipwrecked mariners from the spells and sorceries that had done unto death Thomas Snoad and Satan, the black cat; and from which I myself had but barely escaped, and of which Esau, the hairy man, stood in such evident fear." Therefore, I hied me to the cellar where were the barrels of gunpowder that I have spoken of before, and, labouring hard, I piled eight of these in the great hall, five I left below — they were sufficient to have destroyed a city — one barrel I placed at the closed doorway of the Dark Chamber, and, as I was rolling another towards the chamber with the beauteous maidens and the rosy light, whom should I espy but Esau, greatly

exercised in mind and body, driving before him a wild pig that ran shrieking and in evident dread. The hairy man followed as swift as any hare, and in his hand he held a stout cudgel, with which he ever and anon belaboured the terrified hog.

Amazed, I surveyed this strange spectacle, wondering to what end could serve this baiting and harrying of the ill-looking creature. We were all three of us going in the direction of the chamber with the lovely maidens, and, as I approached, I could see that the door stood wide open as ever, and that the damsels were wondrous fair to gaze upon. From these pleasant reflections my mind was called back to my comrade, who now fell to thwacking the wild pig more mercilessly than before, so that the airs were filled with a piteous squealing that, mingled with the cries of Esau, made as great a tumult as the island had ever listened

to. I marked the open door and then I guessed what Esau was attempting. With a final blow he drove the wild pig, now frantic with fear and pain, across the threshold of the chamber, and then I saw what manner of fate would have overtaken me, had I been foolish enough or hasty enough to have yielded to this great tempting and to have ventured into that house. The wild pig rushed headlong to its fate, as ghastly and as merciless a doom as any that e'er befel living man or beast. For one moment it stood within, hesitating which way to turn, and casting a wild eye over its shoulder at its barbarous pursuer; then, like to the gnashing of a thousand hungry teeth, there fell from roof to floor of the chamber countless sharp-pointed spears that dropped vertically, with a great clamour and clashing of steel as the metal heads struck the flag-stones. Upon every square foot of flooring

there fell sure and straight no less than three of these sharp-pointed rods of iron, so that as I looked the chamber was barred from wall to wall, thick with iron staves as is a forest with trees. By eighteen such spears was pierced the wild pig, held hard and fast, so that he died upright standing dead and bleeding on his four legs. The lovely maidens neither stirred nor made signs either of horror or joy; they stood silent, untouched and uninjured, while all about them was bar on bar of iron.

So this was the special devilment that overhung the third chamber, and straightway I rolled my cask to its very threshold in the same manner as I had placed another against the doorway of the Dark Chamber. Esau and I fetched yet another barrel and this we stood upright before the Chamber of Riches, so that the ashes of the Hag of the Turret and her last dwelling

place might be scattered in one common eruption.

All that there now remained for me to do, was to lay a powder train 'twixt all these barrels, which I cheerily set about, making a black line, thick and heavy, that ran from the cellar to the great hall and to the three chambers, then downhill to the wood. This done, we returned for our two barrows, that we trundled along to a good mile beyond where ended the train of gunpowder.

It was now quite dark, and we moved hastily, I holding in my hand a box of the red-tipped splinters of wood that when rubbed hard burst into flame. Cautiously and with great care I set fire to the end of the powder train, and then the two of us ran till we were out of breath. Presently there were two reports and a bright flame spread like sheet-lightning across the night.

"The Chambers!" I cried, as a third explosion rang out.

We were now beyond the wood in an open country, and we could see the castle on the hill-top stand dark against the sky. An instant later and the countryside stood out green and gold as in broad daylight, and turret and walls toppled and fell as does a child's house that is built of wooden bricks, and then was blotted out and clouded with a huge volume of smoke, thick, dense and opaque; afterwards, silence and black night, and all was still and peaceful as before.

Esau, the hairy man, had witnessed this great spectacle, and now frantic with delight he capered about me and knelt at my feet and put his lips to my hands till I had perforce to kick him hard so that he might take himself away and be grateful with a lesser show of devotion. This he did, rub-

bing his flanks and the other spots where my foot had dwelt.

So was that accursed castle wiped from off the face of this earth, and thus were Satan, the black cat, and Thomas Snoad, my fellow-adventurer, avenged fully and to the hilt.

Chapter VI

THERE was a feeling of triumph in my heart as once more we journeyed to the sea-shore, to embark on our good ship and set sail across the green waters. Manfully we pushed our barrows before us, I singing brave songs as I strode, and, though our loads were weightier than they had ever been before, our two carriages seemed wondrous light and easy of guidance.

Hope is a wondrous well, and I had drunk deep of its waters, a rare medicine, that, after these many days of fear and terror, was bringing my manhood back to me and implanting new courage in my heart. Our ship stood ready, and carefully we stowed away

our provisions and the spoils of the Dark Chamber. The next two days we went a-hunting, slaying whatever beast or fowl came in our way, so that we might have fresh meat in plenty. Many gourds we filled with fresh water from a stream, and, on the third day, we resolved that we would hoist our sail at sunrise on the following morning and then away.

The last eve I paid a visit of farewell to the great bronze idol. The thirteen diamond stones sparkled as never they had sparkled before, and, as I gazed, a huge desire seized on me and grew so strong that I, feeling that with the new ship had come new strength and power, swore loudly and with many oaths that the jewels should be mine.

In the morning when all was ready and we had only to push off from the shore to be free and beyond the reach of the evil and the magic that lurked within this bewitched island, I helped

Esau to float our ship and instructed him to get out the oars and row close along the shore till he was opposite the spot where stood the brazen idol, making sign to him that I would join him at that place, swimming straight out from the shore onto our vessel.

He set off without misgiving of any kind, while I, walking rapidly, was presently face to face with the great figure and the glistening stones. So that I might have the more courage I talked wildly in the idol's brazen face, with strange grimaces and much mockery, saying, " Thou art a false god and the jewels be not thine," beside other things unwise to recall. Also did I roll my tongue at the dumb figure and I spat with scorn on the sand at its feet. For in the night-time, as I lay awake, I had thought of a plan whereby I might reach the necklet, and now I approached the great idol with a rope that I made fast about its waist,

using great caution and keeping well without the reach of the brazen arms. I had thought that I might approach the idol from behind, using to that end the half of my rope that hung from the hips to the ground beside me, for, by aid of the rope, I could reach the figure's middle, from thence I could easily climb to the brazen shoulders, and then the gems would be mine.

At first I tried to ascend the rope with my hands, dragging my body after me; but the idol was at too great a height from the ground. and I had not sufficient strength to reach its waist, where I would have obtained a foothold. I attempted this manner of reaching the necklace till I was well nigh fit to drop from exhaustion, and then, this having failed, another plan came to me. I would use my feet, steadying myself by the rope and thus climb, step by step, to the idol's waist, much as children, holding their father's

hands, climb from his knee to his thigh and then upward over his body to his shoulders. Once more I attempted to ascend the huge figure, but the polished bronze was all smooth and slippery as is winter ice, so that my feet could get no foothold and moved as if they had been greased with fat, and after every few steps I had to begin afresh. Seven times I fell, hanging by the rope in mid-air and swinging to and fro without control of my body. At the seventh fall I was mad with rage and fury, for I am of a hot temper, and, losing hold of my rope furiously did I run round to the face of the great figure, crying, "Idol, thou art a false god, and I, Silas Fordred, fear thee not, nay, nor an hundred of thy breed!" and much more of a like nature. With that I climbed in a mad heat onto the great knee, still calling out aloud my defiance, from thence I onto the loins, and, as my hand

pressed on the outstanding breast, I head a noise as of metal grinding against metal and the brazen arms quivered, while, in that self-same moment, I loosed my hold and fell heavily to earth, and over my head I heard the clash of the great arms as they met the body—'twas as the striking of a bell. I lay on the sea-shore, stunned and dazed from my fall, and then the ground beside me shook and there was a noise as of thunder that is near. For some moments I was without sense or understanding, and when my mind once more became live and active and I had rubbed my eyes, wondering the while whether I was on earth and alive or dead and in the realms beyond, there came back to me the clash of the giant arms and the memory of how I had striven to wrest the necklet from the brazen throat.

The sun was strong in my eyes and I raised my head trying to discover the

exact nature of what had befallen, and behold, at my side lay one half of the bronze idol, that was broken across the middle and in two parts, as were Thomas Snoad and the skeletons that lay about and around it. The lower half of the figure was still seated, rigid and meaningless; the upper part had fallen onto the earth beside me, and on its neck glistened and shone the thirteen great diamonds. Slowly it dawned upon me what had befallen, and I explained the reason of the severed body thus: the brazen arms had found no body to break their force, and they had closed with all their might and weight on the brass body of the idol's self, and had sundered it as they had sundered the flesh and bones of poor Thomas Snoad, my friend.

Now I rose to my feet and tore the necklet from the brazen throat that lay all helpless at my side, and the stones were set in fine gold, and close at hand

they were even larger and brighter than they had seemed when sparkling up on high above my head.

Gleefully I put the jewels into my pouch, where were also the fangs that I had broke from the jaw of the Hag of the Turret, and then a great fear seized on me; for, though I am a man, pious and a believer in the one and only God and His Son Jesus and the Virgin Mary, yet still did I dread that the idol might seek to avenge what I had caused to befall, and quick and straight, without halting, yet ever and anon looking backward over my shoulder to see whether or not I was pursued, I ran as fast as my legs could bear me to the water's edge and spied for my ship and Esau, who was rowing her close in shore. They were near at hand, and, with a cry of joy, I plunged into the surf, first feeling at my pouch to see that the diamonds were secure within; then I turned hastily to the

land, a new wave of dread surging through my body. Esau marked the swiftness with which I struck out from the shore, and I swam like one possessed, for, following me with the speed of the wind was the sable figure of the turret, he whose image I had destroyed with a hammer — the vile Sorcerer himself. At last I clambered over the side of the ship, and without a word I sprang in a cold sweat of fear and despair to the rope that would hoist our sail, and when Esau knew that I was tugging for the dear life, he, too, came over and worked beside me, though with a surprised look in his face as if he wondered as to the cause of this excessive fear and haste.

"Look, look!" I cried, "he follows us!" and I pointed to the shore, and Esau looked and shook his head. "There is nothing, you say?" and I, too, turned my eyes landward, yet all I could see was the flat foreshore with

the sundered idol and the woods and foliage beyond. Only when we were far from land, with the sea spreading white under our keel, did I regain my composure and throw off the fear that had seized upon me as I escaped with my booty.

Esau had all the while gazed at me in wonder and with some joy, for he had marked the broken god, yet had he not understood what actual occurrences had taken place during my absence that forenoon. With much making of signs I told him all that was possible, and when I held the great gems before his eyes he blinked and smiled, dazzled by their exceeding beauty and joyful to think that I had overcome the dread figure that guarded those shores.

That night, with sail hoist over our heads, we were far out to sea, and the land of strange witchcrafts and fearsome spells was nowheres to be seen,

while all around us stretched and sighed the great waters.

Yet one more mystery came to pass ere we were quit of the Sorcerer's coast wherein we had fared so evilly, and this time we were fortune's favourites and the new spell worked us a service.

I have spoken before of the three handles that are of solid silver and like to those on a door, that you may see for yourselves on the strange barque. Though now you may turn and wrench these handles and naught befalls, yet, when on the third day of our voyage—and I have sworn it—I turned the middle handle out of mere curiosity, straightway did the ship proceed with speed some ten times greater than before, as though stirred and pressed forward by some strange miracle, like unto one of those that are told of in the Holy Book. Like an arrow it clove the waters and the spray danced joyfully at it flanks, while the sweet, cool wind

played on our faces and made the blood under our cheeks quick and flush with motion. Again I turned the handle, and then the ship moved as it had moved before with but a single sail. Another handle was a rudder that steered marvellous sure, so that when both spells were at work we progressed with great ease and swiftness. For seven days and seven nights we shot forward like a sea-bird, although our sail lay idle aboard; then we dropped down to a dead stillness, drifting idly as the waters listed, and, though I turned the handles all manner of ways the ship went none the faster. The magic that had given us wings had ceased, and we rehoist our sail and went onward at a more natural speed. All the time our eyes were turned to the north and to the south and eastwards and westwards, seeking for a ship or a land where there were men, so that we might be informed as to what strange seas we were sailing,

and in what direction lay the good port of Hythe and England, my own native land.

Though we had left the Fearsome Island and all its witchcrafts behind us, yet were our hardships in no ways ended; indeed, when I think aright, meseems that they were but just begun, for, what are sudden death and dangers quick and violent compared to the slow tortures of hunger and thirst! Looking backward in the enforced leisure of our aimless sailing, and I had many a long hour wherein to think of what was past, I discovered that, for all my self-commiseration, there was a certain pleasurable excitement mingled with the fears and dangers I had encountered during my sojourn on the witchcurst land that I had quitted. From one hour to another I had been lost in wonder and thought, not knowing what the next might bring forth, and, together with

this insecurity, there was a certain secret blessing that I had not hitherto recognized; for, had I not learned to know and to believe in myself, and had I not been tried and tempted as are few men; and was I not the stronger and the manlier for all these wrestlings? I had issued unharmed from countless dangers, and, for much of my present safety and security, I had but to thank my own ready wit and courage; and, on the day when Esau and myself set out on our homeward voyage, I felt more of a man, aye, a man strong and of a clear brain, than ever I had felt before—or since either, for that matter—and it seemed that, in spite of the many anxious and troubled days and nights that I had lately undergone, still had I much to be grateful for.

Yet there was a far stronger and a more wearisome test of courage and manhood before me than any I had

undergone, and, though 'twas of a less entertaining nature, yet, nevertheless, was its mark deeper and more lasting than all my struggles against witchcraft and black sorcery.

The first days of our voyage were idly spent; I had much to think on, and Esau was content to watch me and prepare our food. Above our heads were blue skies, and I have ever observed that when the heavens are without cloud the heart of man doth also beat serene and joyful. On our setting out I had made Esau wear a suit of blue cloth that I had taken express from the castle, for I knew that as we sailed the airs would grow colder and he would feel the lack of garments. He wore this costume for the first two days of our voyage, and, though I could see that it irked him, he made no sign of disapproval. On the morning of the third day he was hairy and naked as before, and, when

I questioned him, he pointed to the waters, and I could not but smile, so like an idle child was he with his excuses and shamelessness. We had fair weather for the first two weeks of our voyage, and though this be a long time when passed on the open sea and with but a single companion and he devoid of reasonable speech, yet, the whole while was I of a stout heart and exceeding cheery. All these days we had spied neither sail nor land, though from morn till eve we kept an eager watch, and through the night we looked hard for light and a beacon. I had taught Esau that seamanship which was needful for the safe conduct of our ship, and he was greatly content to serve me, though marvelling greatly at the vast expanse of ocean that seemed to have no ending. By-and-by the warm airs through which we had passed grew cooler, and overhead the blue of the sky took on a paler

hue. The sea too grew more boisterous, and Esau, the hairy man, that was no sailor, was sick and greatly troubled. He lay quite still in the cabin with his two hands pressed to his middle, and the big tears ran down the sides of his face and he made moan and groaned, so that I who listened was sore moved and pitiful. After awhile the cold airs took hold of him and he lay below and coughed till my heart grew heavy within me. For some days we encountered stormy weather, after which came a great calm, and for more than a week we lay quite still, while our sail hung idle on the mast. By now we had lost all count of time and I was sore perplexed and doubtful, wondering with some misgiving as to how this voyage would end. Yet another misfortune was in store for us, for the provisions that we had aboard grew less and less, and day for day we ate but half our fill and

we were athirst from morn to night, never daring to drink largely from our fast emptying gourds. At first when we encountered the dead calm I have spoken of we made some efforts with our oars, but, after awhile, our feebleness of mind and body proved too strong and we were content to drift idly, a prey to all manner of hopeless thoughts. Many a time in those long days did I wish that I had been content to remain on the island, and in Esau's eyes, that were large and reproachful, I saw the same misgiving. Yet now 'twas too late to turn back, and we floated from night to morning with still another comrade to bear us company and keep watch, so that we were three on board the ship, and our names were, Esau and Silas Fordred, and the Evil Conscience of Silas Fordred.

Those days were overlong, and I grew thin and haggard with thought,

hunger and inaction. In the morning of each new day I would reflect that I had done what I had done, meaning no harm and with all good intent; yet, in the afternoon, when for hours I had gazed on Esau, lying quite still and with a deadly cough in his chest, groaning heavily from sickness and evil nourishment, my conscience smote me, and I felt that I was both a brute and a fool for having bartered dry land and ample meat for this desert of green sea that gave forth nothing. Then I thought that, had we had better fortune, and had we encountered a vessel that had aided us, I would have had no cause for self-reproach. I pondered on these things hour after hour, and my thoughts were but a circle, and in this circle I wandered continually and ever, so that what my brain held was of little use to me and of much harm. Greatly and often did I fear that my reason might desert me, and that some

day I should be discovered on the open sea, mad and with a vacant gaze, all alone save but for a naked savage, and he nigh dead from hunger, sickness and thirst—a pretty picture, truly, and by no means over-pleasant to dwell with continuously.

I shall write no more of these hardships, suffice to say that I would not endure them over again for all the wealth that is in the universe, and, believe me, there was more real suffering in these long weeks spent hungry and in pain on the empty sea than in all my traffickings with sorcerers and idols of bronze. We had lost count of time and most other things, and every moment I was expecting the ghost of Esau to be given up, when the good ship *Queen Marie* of Plymouth crossed our track and took us aboard. God alone knows how long we had been afloat and how near I had been unto

death. Esau, that was a naked savage, had less power of endurance than I that can read and write and do wear clothing, for, three days after we were rescued, and though the captain of the *Queen Marie* spared us no care or attention, Esau, the hairy man, died in my arms. He had been greatly ailing when we had encountered the English barque, coughing much and being warm with fever, and there was no strength left in him after the many days he had thirsted and lived on insufficient food. We buried him at sea, and thus, of all the four that had dwelt on the Fearsome Island, I alone survived. The two halves of Thomas Snoad were buried on the sea-shore; Satan, the black cat, died in the Dark Chamber, as I have narrated; Esau, the hairy man, died at sea on board the ship *Queen Marie* from hunger, thirst, and sickness brought on by ex-

posure to wind and weather, for he was no seaman, but a naked savage of the woods and dry land.

Thus, alone, did I return from the first voyage I had undertaken on my ship *Brave Luck*, that now lies fathoms deep in an unknown sea, with riches and wealth in plenty, yet the price I had paid was a dear one, such as no man dare pay a second time.

The captain of the *Queen Marie* had made my strange barque with the silver handles fast to his own ship, so that I was able to bring it hither, and, thirteen days after our encounter, he landed me at Plymouth, from which port I made my way homeward, after rewarding my rescuers fittingly with thanks and with gold.

Thus did I return once more to Hythe, and, hear ye, I have written the truth and naught but what these

eyes have seen, and may God and the Virgin save me if I speak untrue.

(Signed) SILAS FORDRED,
Master Mariner of Hythe.

Witnessed by
EVAN the Welshman,
Town Clerk.

Dated February 3d, 1660.

APPENDIX

SUCH is the narrative of Silas Fordred, master mariner of Hythe, the cinque port in the county of Kent.

Now on reading this strange story I was greatly perplexed. It seemed difficult to believe that this direct Elizabethan mariner had fabricated the string of events here reproduced, for, by his own showing, he was a plain and simple man, without overmuch imagination or phantasy, and I found it indeed hard, with my extended knowledge of man and woman, to set down this yarn of Silas Fordred's as one huge lie from beginning to end, as a man of shorter sight and less penetration might have set it down. Often I pondered over the strange land of the bronze idol and what had happened

there, and the only clue I had to the mystery was the inscription in tall ebony letters:

"DIGO RODRICOVEZ,"

which in truth was little help to me. Yet for many months these two words remained in my head, and often have I seen them stand out clear and black before my eyes.

Everything comes to him that waits, so that one day as I was burrowing among some old volumes in the great library of the British Museum, I ran across a large folio bound in brown leather and printed in the Spanish tongue. In that language was inscribed on the title page: *The Life and Adventures of Don Diego Rodriguez.* Again the words "DIGO RODRICOVEZ" came back to me, and eagerly I read page after page of the great volume.

From it I gathered that Don Diego Rodriguez was a man of much cun-

ning, with great learning and skill in alchemy. Towards the end of the fifteenth century he had become Grand Inquisitor of Spain, and in that capacity had devised machines of so fiendish a nature that his brother inquisitors had held a council at which it was conclusively proved that Don Diego was in league with the Devil, and it was furthermore decided that for the welfare and safety of the State, it were well that the Grand Inquisitor should leave the country and take his hellish inventions elsewhere; for no man, were he Cardinal or the King's own self, was safe, as the Don could kill without leaving wound or sign of poison or other witness. In the same year as that in which the council was held, Don Diego had left Spain in a curious vessel of his own construction, that had neither mast nor sail nor galley-slave. He took with him the whole of his vast wealth, and, such

was the dread that men had of him, that no one made effort to deprive him of his ill-gotten treasure. His sole companion was a girl child, reputed to be his daughter, and thus he set off across the ocean.

The rest of his life is shrouded in some mystery, and there is no absolute certainty as to his further movements. Rumour hath it that he reached an island, presumably one of the West Indies, where he landed and caused the natives to build him a great castle; also, that as soon as this was accomplished he set to work to depopulate the island by means of the same hellish inventions that were the cause of his banishment.

Such in brief was the story of Don Diego Rodriguez, whom I hold to be identical with Silas Fordred's "DIGO RODRICOVEZ," and, seeing that Silas had but his memory and an imperfect education to trust to, there is little to

wonder at in the fact that the Hythe seaman should so misspell what he had but read long months before.

What makes me further incline to an implicit belief in this theory is, that among other marvels accredited to the Don was the power of making permanent the reflection of a human face in a mirror, a discovery somewhat akin to our modern art of photography. This will account for the figure behind the red silk curtain, doubtless a reproduction of the Don's own features. The reappearance of this figure when Silas was escaping to his ship with the diamonds was no doubt due to the seaman's evil conscience—merely an hallucination of an excited brain. Most of the other so-called marvels were skilfully constructed machines that any mechanical engineer of the present day could double; that such was the case is amply proved by the failure from rust and unuse of the mechanism that

worked the giant sword-blade that Silas encountered in the great hall. Further, I have little doubt but that the "Hag of the Turret" was the identical girl-child, grown old, that accompanied Don Diego when he left Spain; naturally, Silas Fordred saw in this bearded old woman a "witch" and a "sorceress," and most men of his day, even those of birth and education, would have arrived at a similar conclusion, especially after the episodes that preceded the encounter. The hairy man, Esau, was in all probability an aboriginal native, one, or the child of one, that had escaped the Don's clutches.

I have only to add that, in my humble opinion, it must have been Don Diego Rodriguez, and not Christopher Columbus, that really discovered America.

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